

The Christian

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IN THE LAST NEWS-LETTER Mr. Middleton Murry propounded the momentous question whether a free and tolerant society can maintain itself in a technological age and in competition with totalitarian political systems.¹ He was driven to the conclusion that the greatest obstacle to its survival is the implacable opposition of Russia.

The problem is not simply that two contrasted ways of life are to-day in competition with one another. It is complicated, and its solution made immeasurably more difficult, by the association of these different ways of life with the oppositions of systems of power, and in particular the vast concentrations of power in Russia and the United States.

This element of power, as this generation is far more fully aware than its predecessors, is not a transient or subsidiary element in human life but an essential and cardinal factor in the historical process. Ideas and ways of life can become effective in history only by embodiment in systems of power. The inseparable association of ideas and ways of life with

NEWS-LETTER

RELATIONS WITH
THE U.S.S.R.

SUPPLEMENT

AMERICAN CHURCHES
AND SOVIET-
AMERICAN RELATIONS

¹ It is important to observe that Mr. Murry in an article reviewing Benedetto Croce's *Politics and Morals* (Allen & Unwin, 8s. 6d.) in *The Fortnightly* for November, insists on the necessity of distinguishing clearly between political liberalism, which is a spirit, and free enterprise in the economic field. Croce, the prophet of liberalism, recognizes that it is quite possible "with the most sincere and keen liberal conscience" to support measures and regulations that are commonly regarded as socialist.

the organization of power precludes us from thinking of the tension between Russia and the West as a straight issue between the democratic and the totalitarian way of life or as an unambiguous conflict between light and darkness.

We have spoken of an opposition between Russia and the West, because on a number of important matters, including the interpretation of democracy, there is a common western tradition and outlook which is sharply at variance with communist ideology. But we are not in this News-Letter dealing with British foreign policy, and nothing said here is to be taken as implying any particular view of the extent to which that policy should in present circumstances align itself with American policy or pursue an independent line of its own.

THE WESTERN POWERS AND THE U.S.S.R.

In the international struggle for power, in which life is pitted against life, power against power, there is no standpoint above the conflict from which we can form an objective judgment of the rightness or wrongness of claims and counter claims. Each side has a case which seems from its own point of view conclusive and unanswerable.

The Russians have plenty of grounds for distrust of the Western Powers. America is establishing military bases within striking distance of Russia. It has the atomic bomb and no assurances can efface from Russian memories the fact that America with the concurrence of Great Britain has used it. Behind much of the manœuvring at meetings of the United Nations lies the rivalry of national interests in oil. To what lengths will the economic drive of American capitalism be pushed? How far will business interests demand military protection? To what extent is the American Government in effective control of hidden and anonymous forces, which may force it into courses other than it may wish to follow? Great Britain also has started a drive for world trade to re-establish its position.

Those who control the destinies of Russia, on the other hand, have by their conduct in recent months created the

impression, even in the minds of well-wishers and open-minded observers, that they have deliberately turned their backs on a policy of friendly co-operation in favour of aggressive independence. They have exhibited in many instances a ruthless disregard for human rights and a callous indifference to human suffering. They appear to be obstinately obstructing the concerted measures that are needed to set the world on its feet. Will not concessions by the Western Powers be interpreted simply as signs of weakness and strengthen the extremists bent on aggression?

Dr. Reinhold Niebuhr, whose progressive sympathies are well-known, has contributed to a recent issue of the American magazine *Life* an out-spoken article, presenting the conclusions which he reached as the result of a visit of some weeks to Germany. In it he brands the confusion in American liberal thought, which finds expression, for example, in the speeches of Mr. Wallace, as catastrophic in the light of European realities. He regards it as beyond doubt that the aim of Russia is to conquer the whole of Europe strategically and ideologically, and believes that the prospects of success in this policy are greatly increased by the kind of illusions which prevail in the democratic world. The whole of non-communist Europe, he maintains, sees in firm resistance to Russian expansion the only real hope of peace. This analysis of the facts by a Christian theologian and a liberal in political conviction may cause surprise in some quarters, Dr. Niebuhr recognizes, but it has been the unfortunate weakness of both liberalism and liberal Christianity that they have been unwilling to look unpleasant facts in the face.

In this tragic world such well-meaning blindness may lead to unimaginable disaster. But it is also true that the real intentions of Russia and the real interplay of forces in that country are to a large extent shrouded in mystery. Mr. Harold Nicolson, after observing things closely at first hand at the Paris Conference, commends to those who incline to indulge in facile generalizations about Russia the reticence and restraint of Lord Inverchapel, our late ambassador in Russia, who when asked questions about the

Kremlin system replied in many cases "I don't know". Mr. Nicolson refers to four main schools of thought about Russia, each of which can produce much circumstantial evidence in support of its view but not enough to carry complete conviction. To the question whether the conduct of the Russians at the Paris Conference made one or other of these interpretations of the Russian attitude seem more or less probable, he replies, with Lord Inverchapel, "I don't know."¹

We don't know. And yet incalculable consequences may depend on our guessing rightly and acting in accordance with our guess.

THE CRISIS AND CHRISTIAN FAITH

It is not the function of the Churches nor a concern of the Christian News-Letter to offer advice or express a judgment about the right moves in the complicated game of power-politics. Those who watch from outside cannot know all the factors which must enter into the calculations of a statesman.

On the other hand, no Christian can close his heart to the torment of the world. If in this supreme crisis of human survival Christian faith has nothing to contribute in thought and action and reconciling love, men may be excused if they turn away from it as having no meaning for their earthly life. It may be only through facing this crisis in its depths that the meaning of Christianity for our age will be revealed to us and to the world.

The question with which we are concerned in this News-Letter is how Christians ought to think about the relations between Russia and the western world and what help the Churches can give them to think rightly about these matters.

It is impossible to exaggerate the responsibility of Christians in the present crisis. We believe that in Christ the tremendous drama of human history is given significance through the overcoming of even its greatest contradictions. But that faith proves its reality only when we face these contradictions on the political plane and have the courage

¹ *The News Chronicle*, October 9th, 1946.

to acknowledge that Christ reigns in the actual conflicts of our time and has to be obeyed here and now.

We need not suppose that to achieve a Christian attitude in such large issues is going to be easy. We must expect it to tax our utmost resources of mind and will. It will involve holding together in tension contrary states of mind which psychologically are very difficult to combine.

If the love of God possesses our being, we shall be filled with overflowing goodwill towards the Russian people. We shall be eager to understand their way of life. We shall be inclined to attach a high value to all that is good in it. We shall spare no pains to break down all barriers that stand in the way of mutual understanding. We shall never forget that, while their doctrines may be false, their sentiments may be sound and ready to respond to the right kind of appeal. How this attitude of goodwill might express itself in political action is a subject too large for discussion in this News-Letter.

Over against this stands the Christian obligation to maintain and defend a free and tolerant society as a necessary means of discovering truth through unrestricted enquiry and of realizing the good life. Communism denies both in theory and practice the reality of objective truth and justice. It refuses to admit that power can, and ought to, be subjected to the restraints of law and morality. It is prepared to trample ruthlessly on individual rights and liberties, when these seem to impede the realization of desired social ends.

These rejections of Christian values are not peculiar to Communism. They have struck deep roots in western society also. It would be a dangerous simplification of the problem to equate the fight against them with the existing tension between East and West. But it remains true that while liberalism, as well as Christianity, repudiates and denounces them, Communism has made them part of its professed creed. Between a liberal society, however imperfect may be the measure of justice actually achieved, and a dictatorship based on force there is a radical difference, and on that difference the fate of mankind may hinge.

Here, then, is our acute dilemma. How may we combine open-mindedness towards communist Russia, an infinite readiness to learn and determination to understand, with a whole-hearted commitment to the service and defence of a free society? Are not the two attitudes psychologically irreconcilable? If through an academic remoteness from real life or through a naive simplicity and blindness to the power of evil, we fail to recognize in time the threat to a free society, we may awake to find ourselves the victims of an irremovable tyranny. That there are power-loving and unscrupulous men in positions of power in democracies as well in totalitarian regimes it would be absurd to deny. But where public opinion can freely express itself and the rights of an opposition are acknowledged, their actions are subject to restraints and there is always the possibility of driving them from power.

THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH AND COMMUNISM

The attitude of the Roman Catholic Church to Communism has been authoritatively defined in the Encyclical *Divini Redemptoris* of Pius XI in 1937 and elaborated in many papal utterances since that time.

No one can doubt that on the religious level there is between the Christian and the Communist view an irreconcilable antagonism regarding the ultimate meaning of life. Marxism professes to offer a complete interpretation of human purpose and destiny on a naturalistic basis. It assumes that a change in material conditions will suffice to allow the human spirit to develop its full potentialities. For Christianity the centre of man's life is not in this world but in his relation to God. It holds that when the connection with that true centre is severed, man becomes the victim of a fatal contradiction in his own life and in his relations with his fellows. Between these opposing views there can be no accommodation.

But the opposition between Christianity and Communism is not simply a religious difference of ultimate beliefs. The conflict arises and cannot but arise, also, on the political plane. Roman Catholics in virtue of their numbers are a

strong political force, actual or potential, in many countries in Europe. It was stated recently in regard to France by the Russian paper *Isvestia* that "only two large organizations now exist which exercise real authority over millions of people—the Communist Party and the Catholic Church". Roman Catholics in Europe, when nominal adherents are included, are at least ten times as numerous as the members of the Communist Party in that continent, though these figures convey no true picture of the vitality of the opposing forces.

It is these facts which gave important political significance to the speech of the Pope in June of this year on the eve of elections in France and Italy, which was broadcast in five languages. His words are worth recalling:—

"To-morrow, the citizens of two great nations, go in compact array to the polling booths. What is really at issue? It is to be decided whether the one and the other of these two nations, of these two sister-nations of Latin culture, of more than millenary Christian civilization, will continue to rest on the firm rock of Christianity, on the acknowledgment of a personal God, on belief in the spiritual dignity and the eternal destiny of man; or whether they will choose to entrust their lot for the future to the unfeeling omnipotence of a materialistic State, without any ideals that stretch out beyond this world, without religion and without God."

The occasion on which these words were spoken makes it evident that the conflict between Catholicism and Communism takes place not only at the religious level, but in the arena of the secular struggle for economic and political power. There have come into existence recently on the continent of Europe Catholic parties with progressive social aims. They have at some points made common cause with Communists. Some of these Catholic political movements may have an important influence on the future of Europe. But in the main the alliance of the Roman Catholic Church has been with conservative and reactionary forces, and the weight of the hierarchy has been thrown on that side. It is

natural for the Russians to regard this as support of those who are seeking the overthrow of Communism. In the struggle for power in the international field the Russians are aware that the powerful Roman Catholic political influence in the United States is strongly anti-communist, and consequently anti-Russian, and is exercised in ways that increase American hostility towards Russia.

Because of the ambiguity resulting from this opposition on two different planes, the Catholic position is not simply one of defending human freedom against the totalitarian danger. While there are from the Christian standpoint grave errors and intolerable practices in Communism, not all the social changes brought about by it are bad, nor are all the social structures attacked by Communism deserving of Christian support. "It is fatally easy" as *The Economist* has said, "to slip from a legitimate opposition to Communism to an illegitimate defence of the evils and the institutions which Communism can reasonably attack".¹

A strong attack on the Pope's speech on the eve of the French and Italian elections was made in the *Christian Century*,² the leading Christian weekly paper in the United States. The Pope was charged with issuing "a call for a holy war on Communism". Protestants were warned not to allow themselves to be caught in a trap. They must shut their ears to siren voices which, on the specious plea of defending Christian values, sought to involve them in a titanic struggle, waged with atomic weapons, in which the price would be paid in blood and treasure mainly by the Protestant nations.

The Pope's speech does not really lend itself to the interpretation put on it by the *Christian Century*. There is nothing in his words that goes beyond exhortation to spiritual and moral action. In the same paragraph in which he spoke of a "crusade", he interpreted it by a plea that the coming month should be "devoted entirely to a fervent and devout preparation with particular expression in practical actions of charity, mercy and penitence". It is when the

¹ August 31st, 1946.

² June 26th, 1946.

speech is read in the context of the existing struggle for political power that the ambiguities and dangers inherent in the situation becomes evident.

THE WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

The attitude of other Churches towards Communism and its embodiment in the U.S.S.R. has up to the present received little authoritative definition. This is not a position in which the Churches can rest. The issues between Catholicism and Communism, as the writer in the *Christian Century* clearly sees, are such as "will eventually so shake the western world that no religious groups can stay out".

The Churches represented in the World Council of Churches have provided themselves with the machinery for examining in co-operation the questions at issue. There has been set up in preparation for the first Assembly of the World Council of Churches in 1948 a Commission on International Affairs. It is safe to assume that one of the first questions to which the Commission will give its attention is the relations between Russia and the western Powers.

There has not been time as yet for the Commission to formulate its plans. What we may hope is that its work will help the Churches on the basis of growing knowledge to arrive at a common attitude towards the vast issues involved in the debate between East and West. Unanimity of opinion is not to be expected. The attitude will be more the expression of a common approach to these questions than of common conclusions. It is likely to have less of a political character than Roman Catholicism. But in proportion as it is based on sincere and vigorous thinking and on real insight it will work as a leaven in the political sphere.

The participation of the Russian Church in the World Council of Churches has not yet been decided. Every effort is being made to establish friendly relations with the Russian Church, which may be an important factor in promoting understanding and strengthening the bonds between East and West.

THE AMERICAN CHURCHES AND AMERICAN-SOVIET RELATIONS

A first step in this process has been taken in the issue of a statement on Soviet-American relations by the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America. Since many of our readers will like to have the full text, we are printing it as a Supplement. Whatever we may think of its contents, the fact that the largest and politically most influential body of Christian opinion outside the Roman Catholic Church has defined its attitude to this extent is an important event. The Chairman of the Commission which prepared the statement is Mr. John Foster Dulles, who has an intimate knowledge of the international political situation from the inside. The statement has thus a greater claim on our attention than any individual utterance. It is obviously the best starting point for further study. But equally plainly it is not more than a starting point. On a subject so vast the enquiry has clearly to be pressed further and deeper.

One of the points to which criticism of the statement is likely to be directed is whether the solution proposed is not too simple and the differences too easily resolved. It is urged that different beliefs can exist side by side without leading to open conflict. That is perfectly true, if those who hold them are content to let it be so. But the reality with which we have to deal is not simply the opposition of different "beliefs" but of two great power systems that get in each other's way. If each threatens the other's existence, what then? America had to fight a civil war because the nation could not endure half slave and half free. What if Communism has aggressive intentions, or if the rulers of Russia regard it as essential to security to extend their system over the whole of Europe? Or, on the other hand, if they see in the continued existence of free institutions and in free interchange of knowledge between different countries a threat to their own hold on power?

The solution which the statement offers is the extension to international relations of the principle of toleration, the value of which Americans have proved in their own history (as the British also have done in theirs). But the principle of

toleration is just what Communism rejects, and the grounds of that rejection are stronger than western thought commonly recognizes. Toleration has been possible in the Anglo-Saxon world because of general agreement about certain fundamental values. How can toleration be expected of a party that believes that its opponents, if they succeed in seizing power, will put its leading members to death and set up a regime that it detests? Is the principle of toleration to be extended to the forces that are bent on destroying democracy? These are questions to which no adequate answer has yet been given and they need deeper examination than they receive in the American statement.

NO HOLY WAR

Fundamental as are the differences between Christianity and Communism, any Christian approach to the relations between them must begin by dismissing all thought of a "holy" war. There are no holy wars in history. There are conflicts in which issues of far-reaching moral and spiritual significance seem to our human judgment to be at stake, and in which Christians have for this reason to take sides. But the struggles of history are on the political plane, and on that plane no cause is pure; all are contaminated. Their claim on men's allegiance is relative not absolute.

The Church may at times have to suffer persecution, as at the present time in many parts of Central Europe and the Balkans. But that is not in itself a sufficient ground for active opposition to an existing regime. We have to ask what the practical alternatives are on the political plane to the regime in power. Are they likely to be better or worse? The recent articles in *The Times* on conditions in the Balkans, published as a pamphlet, *The Danubian States*,¹ show how relevant these questions are.

THE SHORT TERM AND LONG TERM PROBLEMS

The immediate task in the relations between the U.S.S.R. and the western Powers is the removal of the danger of war. There is little that the individual citizen can do directly

¹ Printing House Square, E.C. 1. 2d.

towards this end. The forces that may precipitate war are for the most part outside this country and beyond our control, though a right foreign policy on the part of Great Britain may do something, perhaps much, to mitigate existing tensions and diminish the risks of an explosion.

There is one point, however, at which the whole weight of Christian influence on both sides of the Atlantic ought to be thrown into the scale. Observers who have recently visited the United States have come back deeply disquieted by the prevalence of talk about a preventive war before Russia gets the atomic bomb. This is precisely the sort of thing against which Christians have to be especially on their guard. In proportion as an understanding of what atomic and bacteriological warfare means penetrates into men's minds, they are in danger of having recourse in panic to whatever seems to promise safety from so appalling a fate, however illusory the promise may be. Far greater publicity has been given to the meaning and danger of atomic warfare in America than in this country.¹ It is essential that before fears invade and possess our minds we should make clear to ourselves that a preventive war, waged with modern weapons and involving communal murder on a vast scale is a thought which no Christian can even for a moment harbour. The indiscriminate slaughter of combatants and non-combatants, innocent as well as guilty, is an act difficult to justify in any circumstances and on any grounds. Deliberately to let loose atomic war on the world to avert a danger to ourselves which, until it becomes actual, is no more than a threat, would be a crime as black as the mind of man can conceive. Even to entertain the thought is a sign of the extent to which our minds have become darkened and alienated from the Christian knowledge of God. Here Christians are confronted with an unconditional obligation. Rather than be parties to such an act it were better that a millstone were hanged about our necks and we should be sunk in the depths of the sea.

¹ John Hersey's account of what happened at Hiroshima, as it lives in the memories of survivors, which created a sensation when it appeared in the *New Yorker*, has been published as a Penguin and reproduced by the B.B.C.

The long term problem, if war is avoided, is how two opposed types of society, regimented and free, can adjust their relations with one another and what will be the effect of their mutual interaction. No forms of society exist in a pure state; there are always present other elements and forces than those from which they derive their dominant character. Communism transplanted into other countries need not necessarily be the same thing as in Russia. It may be modified in greater or less degree by the forces inherent in the western tradition, if the latter retains sufficient vitality. Communism may shed its present uncompromising form and absorb new elements. Political developments in the different parts of Europe deserve to be carefully watched.

In *The Soviet Impact on the Western World*,¹ Professor E. H. Carr has made a stimulating contribution to thought about these questions. But it may be doubted whether in his well-meant desire to promote an understanding of the Russian standpoint he is sufficiently alive to what is at stake in the preservation of the rights and liberties of the human person and to the intolerable wrongs against which under authoritarian rule there may be no redress. The police state is not merely a subject for academic discussion, but a terrifying actuality. Our British liberal tradition is bound up far more closely with our historical experiences and circumstances than we commonly suppose, and it would be folly to imagine that our conceptions of the rule of law and the rights of minorities could be transplanted overnight to Russia or the Balkans. History none the less presents us with radical and inexorable choices. To imagine that there can ever be a real synthesis of the tradition of freedom and the supremacy of law with a police-State based on naked power is merely a dream.

We cannot fully understand the political problems we have been considering unless we see them in relation to a more profound cultural crisis. We have spoken of a western tradition. But the fundamental fact with which we have to reckon is that that tradition has in the minds of many in Europe and America been deeply undermined. Do the

¹ Macmillan, 5s.

western democracies still retain any spiritual foundation for their democratic faith? The classical tradition of European thought is based on a doctrine of absolute principles. This has been assailed in its foundations by historical and psychological relativism. Marx, Nietzsche, Freud, have made each his far-reaching contribution towards sapping belief in it. Where then do we stand? By what ultimate faith may a man live? Can he order his life without some sense of a law by which he is bound? Is everything permissible if only he can get away with it? Is life really livable without some sense of a divine providence? What ultimate grounds have we for believing in the value of the individual?

It is to these fundamental questions, and in particular the last, that men must have an answer if they are to deal with the problems that confront them in the socialist or planned society into which we are moving. Socialism itself is facing a crisis. Socialism in the nineteenth century was primarily a protest against the dehumanization of man. Since the main force leading to that dehumanization was private gain-seeking, the demand was for the public control of industry. To-day the pressure towards the public control of economic activity comes not so much from humanitarian sympathies as from the necessities of a technological age. The problem that now confronts us is how men's freedom and responsibility, that is to say their humanity, can be preserved in the vast machinery of a state-controlled industry.

It is not possible in this News-Letter to do more than point to the existence of this fundamental cultural crisis. It has been necessary to call attention to it, because it underlies the present political tensions between Russia and the West. Attempts to resolve those tensions which do not penetrate to these deeper levels can provide no real or lasting solutions. These fundamental questions at many points and in many different ways cut clean across many existing oppositions.

A CRISIS OF SPIRITUALITY

In the restricted space of this News-Letter abstractions and generalizations have been unavoidable. To obtain even

an elementary understanding of the subject with which it attempts to deal, it is necessary by a strong effort of the imagination to picture the realities behind such words as war, atomic warfare, power, Russia, America, Great Britain, democracy, liberty, the police-state, the Churches. Each of them embraces facts as numberless as the grains of sand on the sea shore, countless individuals with an endless variety of histories and experiences, ranges of problems and tasks beyond all reckoning. Cutting across the relations between the U.S.S.R. and the West, which we have been considering, and influencing them in all sorts of different ways, are such other events as what is happening in Germany, in the Adriatic, in Egypt and in India, the coal strike in America with its possibly vital effects on grain shipments to Europe and on the industrial recovery of that continent. To expose our minds to these things is to be overwhelmed with a sense of our own impotence.

But that is not all. We cannot think of the forces that are driving our world before them without being conscious that evil has acquired a demonic intensity and strength. Concentrations of power have swollen to titanic dimensions so that men are intoxicated with the love of power. The totalitarian state may become a monster of a kind that was merely foreshadowed by Nazi totalitarianism. It may be all the more the embodiment of Anti-Christ because positive and utilitarian aims are combined with, and made to serve, its materialism and power worship. The same demonic element is manifested in unregulated capitalism. The soulless pursuit of power is matched by the soulless pursuit of profit. The extent to which evil holds us in its relentless grip is brought home to us by the physical and moral decay which is taking place in Germany and which the victor nations are powerless or too callous to remedy. At any moment men in their blindness may let loose forces which will blot out civilization.

The answers to the questions we have been considering have thus to be sought and found in the first instance in the spiritual order. The primary duty of Christians is to pray for reconciliation and for the renewal of the life of the world to

the utmost limit of their power. We have to take our stand where, as we believe, the ultimate issues of history have been defined and determined. In the knowledge that the temporal in all its terrifying reality is embraced by the eternal and held in the grasp of God's invincible love lies our only hope. The battle has to be fought first in our own hearts with our unbeliefs and fears. We need to win by wrestling the assurance that God is greater than the powers of darkness. This does not mean an escape into other worldliness. If it means only that, it means nothing. It must lead us in the strength of that assurance to act responsibly in the conflicts of our time on the plane of the struggle for power.

The actions demanded from us will inevitably be in the main simple duties within our immediate circle and reach. It may be that the larger problem of human relations will prove insoluble. It may be our fate to fight and die for our faith or to perish in someone else's quarrel. It may be that we shall not see peace in our time. We have to accept these possibilities as real, and not give them a further thought. All that is asked of us is that we should do our daily best, which is our sufficient duty and satisfaction, regardless of whether it has any direct effect on the course of history. At the same time, these limited actions have to be directed more and more, as a conscious offering of faith, towards victory for the right in the conflict between Christian faith and materialism and between a free society and a soul-destroying totalitarianism, and towards the effort to avert war, which are the dominant and decisive issues of our time.

Our aim in this News-Letter has been to provide a framework for the further thinking and discussion that are obviously needed.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'R. Dean', with a stylized, flowing script.

P.S. Please send in Christmas Gift Subscriptions by the 13th December.

SOVIET-AMERICAN RELATIONS

A statement submitted by the Commission on a Just and Durable Peace and adopted by the Executive Committee of the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America, October 11, 1946.

WAR with Russia can be avoided and it must be avoided without compromise of basic convictions. Tensions exist which constitute a serious threat to world peace. That fact must be faced realistically and at the same time with courage and vision. It demands a new way of international accommodation which will reckon with fundamental differences in outlook and practice. If the nations find that way in our time, they may set the pattern of a peaceful future. Men should be impelled by a sense of urgency even greater than that which made them determined, resourceful and co-operative to win the war.

I

UNAVOIDABLE TENSIONS AND THE METHOD OF TOLERANCE

The beliefs which we hold as Christians are different in many essential respects from those of the Soviet leaders.

"It is the Christian faith that God's righteous rule is over all men and nations; that in Christ He confronts us all alike in judgment and mercy; that men, though sinful, are made in His image and are not only the concern of His saving work but His agents as well, each of value in His sight without distinction of class, race or condition; that the Church, the body of Christ and the fellowship of Christ's followers, is the creation of His spirit, and the steward of His purpose; that His Kingdom on earth is an unconquerable Kingdom of justice and mercy and truth in which it is our responsibility to bring human laws and human institutions into increasing accord with His holy will."¹

"Our dedication, therefore, is to the progressive realization of the dignity and worth of man in every area of life—political, economic, social and religious—to the world-wide achievement of man's individual freedom, under God, to think, to believe and to act responsibly according to the dictates of his own conscience. This, we believe, is indispensable if God's will for man is to be fulfilled."²

Within the Soviet Union there are many people who share such Christian beliefs. Moreover, communism as an economic program for social reconstruction has points of contact with the social message of Christianity as in its avowed concern for the underprivileged and its insistence on racial equality. However, Marxist communism in its orthodox philosophy stands clearly opposed to Christianity. It is atheistic in its conception of ultimate reality and materialistic in its view of man and his destiny. Its utopian philosophy of history lacks the essential Christian notes of divine judgment, divine governance, and eternal victory. Its revolutionary strategy involves the disregard of the sacredness of personality which is fundamental in Christianity.

Such differences will never be removed by the compromise or surrender of faith by Christians. Also, Christians will not renounce, as to any part of the

¹ National Study Conference on the Churches and World Order, Cleveland, Ohio, January, 1945.

² The Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America, Columbus, Ohio, March, 1946.

world, the right to go and preach the Gospel, teaching men to observe what Christ commanded. They will seek, everywhere, institutions and practices which reflect what they believe to be God's will for man. On the other hand, we cannot realistically anticipate that Soviet leadership will, at an early date, compromise its beliefs or institutions in such a way as to make them compatible with the Christian faith. Neither can we expect it to give up the right to propagate communist beliefs in the world. Therefore, continuing tensions are unavoidable.

Not all Americans hold the Christian faith or hold it to the same extent. Thus, not all will experience the same degree of tension. But enough hold that faith, and hold it devotedly, to make peace at the price of its compromise impossible. Moreover, in our land there is general acceptance of a way of life which permits every individual freely to choose his belief and to carry out its implications. We are convinced that the American people preponderantly cherish that way and will, with all their power, defend it when it is threatened. To the extent that the way of life propagated by Soviet leadership differs from our way of life, the American people as a whole will experience a state of tension.

Despite these differences, peace is possible. We are convinced that a dynamic and fruitful peace can prevail in a world society where conflicts of faith are unavoidable. This will be possible if three requirements are met.

First, the Existence of Conflicting Beliefs must be considered as Normal

People everywhere must recognize that differing beliefs and practices are normal in world society, now and in the future. Also, they must see that those who hold beliefs firmly will seek to propagate them without dilution or compromise.

There is widespread feeling that if different beliefs and institutions come internationally into competitive contact, armed conflict is inevitable. That is why some identify world peace with world conformity. Others seek peace in terms of zones of influence which would insulate one faith from another. When neither attitude is practical, as is the case to-day, they become obsessed with fear. Many followers of Marx preach that armed conflict between communism and "capitalist democracy" is inevitable. A like opinion is held by many in the Western democracies.

Such attitudes account for much of the danger in the present situation. Fear and suspicion lead to acts which, intended to be defensive, seem to others offensive. That, in turn, creates more fear and suspicion. Under these conditions differences which are unavoidable are aggravated and the area of difference is increased by differences and misunderstandings which are unnecessary. Tension mounts until war can become inevitable merely because many people have erroneously thought it inevitable.

There is no excuse for the American people falling into this death trap. They should know, from their own experience, that it is possible for irreconcilable and dynamic beliefs to subsist side by side in peace. That, however, is possible because our American society measurably accepts the principles of the following requirement.

Second, all Men must Renounce the Effort to spread abroad their Way of Life by Methods of Intolerance

The method of tolerance begins with recognition of the sacredness of the individual human personality. From that it follows that men should not

be subjected to compulsion in matters of faith and reason. Individuals must be free to believe as their reason and conscience dictate. They must be permitted to propagate their faith by reason or emotional appeal and by the persuasion of good example. Governments, parties, and other organizations must refrain from imposing or promoting their own particular faith by means which involve violence or intimidation, legal privilege or legal disability, or fraud founded on concealment.

It is that formula of tolerance which makes it possible to combine peace and diversity. Also, it is the formula which best assures sustained human development because it makes possible a peace which is more than stagnation and sterility. It endows peace with the richness of diversity and experimentation and the stimulus of competition. It does not require any to be intellectually or spiritually tolerant of beliefs or practices which seem to them to be evil. It does require all to recognize that no end, however good it may seem, should be sought by foul means.

Third, the United States must accept Primary Responsibility to secure International Acceptance of the Method of Tolerance

The American nation knows the method of tolerance. Our people have used that method—even though imperfectly—for 160 years. They know that it can work both for peace and progress. They have learned that they cannot disregard it with impunity. They are equipped by experience to explain, and by faith to persuade. The American people and their government ought to dedicate themselves to do that with all the urgency appropriate to the greatness of the cause.

Exposition and persuasion are important. But if our initiative is to prevail, it must carry world-wide conviction on two basic facts:—

1. It must be made clear that our nation utterly renounces for itself the use internationally of the method of intolerance. Our people generally consider the faith and institutions of Soviet communism to contain grave evils. But they must recognize the right of others to believe what their reason and conscience may dictate, to reflect their beliefs in human institutions, and by fair means to propagate them. The American people must be resolved never to advance their own faith by forcibly crushing out such another faith. We believe that is their resolve. But they do not always make it clear to others.
2. It must equally be made clear that persistence internationally by the Soviet Government or the Soviet Communist Party in methods of intolerance, such as purge, coercion, deceitful infiltration, and false propaganda shielded by secrecy, will not in fact make their faith prevail and will jeopardize the peace.

That dual position should be presented to Soviet leaders with friendly yet firm persistence. Thereby, within a large area, principle would replace expediency and emotionalism which vary between being "tough" and being "soft" with Russia. It would be found that in many situations policy could be determined by the principles we enunciate.

II

AVOIDABLE TENSIONS AND THE METHOD OF ADJUSTMENT

Differences of belief which are inevitable are often aggravated by differences or clashes of interest which are unnecessary. There are many unneces-

sary differences between the Soviet Union and the Western democracies and they provide an important field for remedial action. It is easy for us to see how Soviet leaders can act to dispel many such differences. It is harder for Americans to see what the United States should do. However, the Christian way is to think first of what we can do. That, indeed, is the practical course for what we can do is within our power. Also, while one side alone cannot end tensions of dual origin, it can make mutuality of effort easier and more likely. The search should not be for ways to placate Soviet leaders irrespective of moral judgment or righteous conviction. Rather, the effort should be to eradicate from our own national position features which cannot be morally or intellectually justified.

First, Change is not of itself Evil

Soviet leadership is dynamic. It emerged through violent revolution and has, with fluctuating intensity, worked for a world-wide revolution of the proletariat. Latterly its dynamism has assumed a more nationalistic and traditional form. During the last decade, the U.S.S.R. has been enlarging its domain beyond that of the states which formed the Union in 1923.

The United States is, and for about fifty years has been predominantly a *status quo* power. It reached a mature and balanced territorial development. This led it to identify peace with perpetuation of the existing territorial and political order.

The American people need to get over the idea that peace is a static condition. Change is the law of life. That does not mean that all change is good. It does mean that to oppose all change is a sure way to violence.

Although it was to be expected that a dynamic Soviet leadership would seek to restore and protect the national domain, yet Christians cannot condone methods of violence which have often been used. Particularly, they cannot condone the purges wrought upon newly acquired peoples or the taking from these peoples of political, intellectual, and religious liberty. They ought to work unceasingly to correct such injustices. That salutary process is, indeed, envisaged by Article 14 of the United Nations Charter. But it should be clear that moral condemnation of Soviet methods and desire to redress their injustice do not cloak a selfish desire on the part of those who want peace to be a static condition, to bear down on all who seek change.

Second, Security is no longer Geographic

Soviet and American military strategists seem still to be seeking security in terms of geography. In an effort to catch up with the increasing range and speed of missiles, they would extend further and further the areas over which their nation has military control. Thus, large areas of the world fall within overlapping strategic orbits. Islands of the Atlantic and the Pacific, Germany, the Balkans, the Mediterranean, and Far East and Near East areas are looked upon by one or another as needed for a defense, which to others seems to carry an offensive threat.

The sharply increased offensive capabilities of modern warfare are such that it is not possible to reconcile a friendly and neighborly policy with such strategic defense as from a military standpoint might seem most effective. Therefore, no nation should allow its action in these matters to be determined by military factors alone. The United States should set an example by renouncing the acquisition of new military bases so far distant from the

continental United States and so close to the Soviet Union that the offensive threat is both disproportionate to the defensive value to the United States and also incompatible with a policy designed to dissipate distrust and to increase good will. This principle applies to all nations.

Third, the Armament Race must be ended

The United States for the first time in its history plans to maintain a large standing army. Our government seems committed to having a navy and air force which will surpass those of any other nation. It is continuing to manufacture atomic weapons and to develop new scientific methods of mass destruction. The latter activities it shrouds with secrecy.

The Soviet Union maintains a standing army which no other nation matches. It is inferior to the United States as regards navy, air force, and modern scientific weapons, notably the atomic bomb. Its leaders are striving to make good such deficiencies. They cloak their military establishment with great secrecy.

The present armament race between the United States and the Soviet Union will, if continued, probably lead to the destruction of both. Such secret competition breeds the suspicion, fear and hostility which make war inevitable.

We believe that every effort should be made to apply the provisions of the United Nations Charter for the regulation and multilateral reduction of national armaments. The proposal for an Atomic Development Authority is a good start in that direction. The Authority would provide true world government within a defined area. That functional approach seems practical and susceptible of enlargement to deal with other means of mass destruction besides atomic energy. Our nation should persist in this course.

Fourth, neither State Socialism nor Free Enterprise provides a Perfect Economic System; each can learn from the Experience of the other

The Soviet Union practices a form of state socialism which is prescribed by the Soviet Communist Party. Soviet leadership seeks, by physical power where that is convenient and by propaganda and penetration elsewhere, to bring communists into positions of influence in the other communities of the world.

The United States practices a form of free enterprise. By credits, trade agreements, and like measures it seeks to keep as much of the world as possible on a free enterprise basis. Each system, fearing economic encirclement, tends to encircle.

We cannot expect the proponents of either state socialism or free enterprise to abandon their beliefs. But they need not, on account of their beliefs, hate or despise each other. Only blind fanaticism looks upon either system as perfect. The free enterprise system has yet to prove that it can assure steady production and employment. It has yet to prove that it can continuously provide industrial workers with that sense of individual creativeness which gives greater satisfaction than mere material possession. The Soviet experiment has yet to prove that it can develop high productive efficiency or that it is compatible with human freedom.

Several Western democracies are trying some moderate socialistic experiments designed to assure full production and employment while

preserving religious, intellectual and political freedom. Soviet socialism has changed much, particularly in placing greater dependence upon the incentive of personal gain. The free enterprise system in the United States has developed such forms of social security as unemployment and retirement benefits which a few years ago would have been judged incompatible with the system.

The economics of the nations are in a state of flux and experimentation. Christians must hold fast to their belief in human freedom and the sacredness of the human personality. They should seek an economic system which does not in fact impair the exercise of religious and intellectual freedom. But they cannot safely be dogmatic. No economic system that now exists can properly be treated as wholly the expression or wholly the negation of Christian principles.

III

NATIONAL INTERESTS AND INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION

To a degree, tension with the Soviet Union results from a spirit of rival nationalism. We have seen how that kind of tension may, to an extent, be alleviated by change in our national attitude. Two other ways exist whereby tension having this origin can be still further relieved.

First, there can be a more Intimate Association between the American and Russian Peoples

There is a long history of uninterrupted friendship between the Russian and American peoples. Neither knows the other well, but each senses that there are fine qualities in the other. That feeling has persisted despite the fact that the Russian people have usually had governments the autocratic character of which the American people distrusted. That relationship between our peoples is something precious to be preserved and developed. At this time, when the Russian people suffer great physical distress, the American people can show sympathy by contributing to their relief. American scientific, cultural, and religious groups ought to do all that is within their power to promote interchange of ideas and visits back and forth, to the end that mutual understanding may increase in our two peoples. Also, despite difference of economic systems, there can be a mutually advantageous exchange of goods.

Second, there can be a Greater Use of the United Nations

The governments of both the Soviet Union and the United States profess high goals of human welfare. But if they seek to realize those goals competitively, the result may be that human misery and distress will be exploited, by each for ulterior purposes. Increased ill-will may result. That will not happen if the United Nations is used, as it was intended to be used: "To achieve international co-operation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural, or humanitarian character." The United Nations can be a medium for courteous and frank discussion of international issues and for harmonizing divergent points of view. It can become a center where nations organize together projects designed to meet commonly recognized needs and to gain commonly endorsed ends. By working together,

they can develop sympathetic understanding, a sense of comradeship, increased trust, and tolerance. In such ways the United Nations can become an effective agent for striking at the basic political, economic and social causes from which international tensions arise.

Every effort should be made to bring the United Nations to develop moral law into more tangible expression in international law. Nations will be more disposed to co-operate through a world organization and to rely upon it for their security when they have agreed upon the laws which they are to observe and to the observance of which the world organization is dedicated.

IV

DEMOCRACY AND THE WELL-BEING OF MAN

The occasion for tension will largely be removed if the democratic peoples will make their political institutions so vigorous and life-giving that men everywhere will want them. That is the surest way to relieve the competitive strain.

A democratic people can, and should, retain antipathy to dictatorship. Their opposition, however, should not be sterile denunciation. The American people must make their democracy work. Racial intolerance, discrimination, and oppression are a standing negation of democracy and Christian morality. Only as we establish a good society at home can we expect that our society will have a spiritual appeal to the masses of mankind.

The fact that many throughout the world are attracted by Soviet communism is not a measure of its adequacy. That is still an unproved factor. Rather the attraction measures disillusionment caused by certain inadequacies of democracy. Americans must undertake at once the task of remedial action within their own borders. Individuals must develop further in themselves the sense of social responsibility and self-reliance without which individual freedom is neither socially tolerable nor beneficial. There is need to show that a free society can maintain a steady flow of production and its equitable distribution. There is need to bring about greater observance of human rights and freedoms for all without distinction as to race or religion. Particularly must America do away with the widely prevalent double standard of personal relations and citizenship applied to Negro Americans. The American people must prove to themselves and to the world that a free society can solve its economic and social problems as well as bring political freedom to its members. If our people do that, democracy, not dictatorship, will be seen by all to be the higher phase of social development.

CONCLUSION

We have outlined a program containing four salient points :—

1. The elimination internationally of methods of intolerance which make it impossible for conflicting beliefs to subsist and be propagated in the world consistently with peace.
2. The elimination from United States' national policy of certain prejudices and practices which unnecessarily create tension.
3. Co-operation of the American and Russian peoples at the scientific, economic, cultural and religious levels and co-operation of the United States Government with the Government of the Soviet Union in the curative and creative tasks envisaged for the United Nations.

4. Demonstration that democratic institutions which reflect the Christian doctrine of the sacredness of the individual personality can be made so vigorous and life-giving, that all peoples will want them.

It is not unreasonable to believe that if Soviet leaders were confronted with a definite, consistent, and strongly-backed American program of this order, they would respond to it, since it would permit their own people peacefully to develop under their own institutions and would permit them by fair methods to propagate their faith in the world. The resulting atmosphere would make it possible to deal in a friendly and fair way with the perplexing post-war problems, including those involved in the peace settlements.

We do not say this in any spirit of easy optimism. We would only delude ourselves if we did not look on the future as one which contains many elements of peril. That, however, is no reason for despair. The future has always been a future of peril. Often the perils have been hidden so that there has been no defense against them. Also, those perils brought with them no opportunity comparable to risk. This time the perils are seen; possible defenses are at hand, and the vigorous and dynamic spirit which produces the peril can also produce an era of unprecedented progress. Thus, men have great opportunity at the price of measurable risk. More than this they should not ask.

To meet and overcome the perils that beset mankind is a task that cannot be accomplished without a united effort by all Americans of every faith and indeed by all men of good will throughout the world. We appeal to all such. Also, as representatives of Protestant churches in this country, we direct a special appeal to our constituents.

In the years when our nation was in its formative stage, Protestant Christians played a leading part in developing our political system. They were men of strong and uncompromising faith. To a considerable extent they held different and irreconcilable beliefs. They knew from bitter experience in other lands what would be the consequences if each sought by violent and unscrupulous means to make his belief prevail. So they banned the use of such intolerant methods. Thereby they found the way to permit differences of belief to subsist, on the one hand consistently with peace and on the other hand without sacrifice of moral or intellectual integrity or of a sense of mission.

To-day we face, at the international level, the same problem they faced at the national level. Many do not see that, for it is a long time since the international scene has been dominated by strongly conflicting faiths. Protestant Christians because of their background ought to be the first to diagnose the true nature of the present problem and to see how it can be solved. We need to put to use the precious heritage which has been left us.

Let us then, inspired by our tradition and our faith, go forward with courage and with confidence that under Divine guidance we may to-day serve mankind as our forebears served our nation.

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